

## Carl Fudge

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS  
31 Mercer Street  
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Carl Fudge's latest series of works takes as its touchstone the prints of Edward Wadsworth, a prominent member of the British Vorticists, who used the hard-edged geometries of machinery, technology, and war as inspiration for an aggressive, avant-garde style meant to catapult England into the twentieth century. Wadsworth's art incorporated docked steamships painted in what was termed dazzle camouflage—sharp, geometric contrasts meant to baffle enemy range finding during World War I.

Alternating between large-scale screenprint collages and smaller woodcuts, Fudge has stripped Wadsworth's prints to a more reductive palette (black paired with a single other color, often white) and schematized the original imagery using computers. A few works—such as *Aground*, 2010—remain quite faithful to their originals. Even as the print doubles and distends imagery from Wadsworth's *Liverpool Shipping*, 1918, it retains a recognizably representational scene, complete with stylized dockworkers. Other works, like the mesmerizing *Transom*, 2010, distill imagery to a tighter economy of abstracted shapes. Some of the least representational prints hew to an underlying grid in a partially ordered tessellation of shapes, while others betray a more chaotically fractured field of forms.



**Carl Fudge, *Transom*, 2010**, screenprint collage on mulberry paper, 42 1/2 x 30 1/4".

Unlike many of his peers (Vitaly Komar, for example, similarly represented by this gallery), Fudge appeals to the (ideologically suspect) art of a notable modernist not, it seems, to rework or ironize political resonances or the failed project of avant-garde utopias. Rather, these prints constitute a decidedly formal venture. The "dazzle" of Fudge's work blithely appears to sidestep the insidious origins of the term's original application in World War I. That possible ingenuousness aside, the crisp, formal sophistication of these prints and woodcuts mitigates the murkiness of their (art-)historical engagement. The delicate *kozo* and mulberry paper of the larger works offers a striking contrast to the rough-and-tumble imagery printed on them. Does that contrast rescue Fudge's conceit, lifting it above the historical fray to which it might otherwise be held accountable? The prints' formal sophistication raises such questions as much as it skirts them.

— Ara H. Merjian

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